

February 14, 2023

**Written Testimony Submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly Joint Human Services Committee in support of HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion of HUSKY Health Benefits to Those Ineligible Due to Immigration Status.**

Co-Chairs Senator Lesser and Representative Gilchrist, Ranking Members Senator Seminara and Representative Case, and Distinguished Members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Samuel Martínez. I live in Storrs-Mansfield and am a naturalized US citizen. I am a member of the Unitarian Universalist Society East in Manchester, a congregation that belongs to the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA), a broad-based organization of 49 faith institutions working together to advance social justice in our region and state.

I am writing in support of HB 6616: An Act Concerning Expansion of HUSKY Health Benefits to Those Ineligible Due to Immigration Status.

As a Unitarian Universalist, I believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every human being, no matter their race, national origin, citizenship, or immigration status. My belief in the inherent worth and dignity of everyone leads me to the conviction that no one should be denied necessary health care because of their immigration status. Health care is a human right.

Justice as well as morality demands that Connecticut move with all deliberate speed toward universal health insurance eligibility. Many members of the immigrant community, including 58% of out-of-status noncitizens in our state, are without any form of health insurance to cover mental or physical health care (compared to just 5% of the overall population). Meanwhile, undocumented people pay \$187 million annually in Connecticut taxes. Having paid their fair share of taxes, out-of-status noncitizens deserve a fair share of health care entitlements.

Above all else, providing health care access to all Connecticut residents is a public health imperative. The State's and the nation's experience with the recent COVID-19 pandemic showed that the undocumented bore a greater vulnerability to infectious disease transmission as frontline, essential workers. The Center for Migration Studies found in 2020 that **74 percent** of undocumented workers, compared to 65 percent of the native-born labor force, carry out essential occupations (<https://cmsny.org/publications/us-essential-workers/#:~:text=CMS%20finds%20that%2069%20percent,the%20native%2Dborn%20labor%20force>). The Legislature can help Connecticut care providers to stem the next potential pandemic disease agent early, by opening the door for every Connecticut resident to get the medical care they need, early enough to prevent loss of life and avert transmission to the wider community. Insuring the undocumented is good for all of us.

Revenue enhancements should also accrue to the State from HB6616. According to an independent analysis by the RAND Corporation, if Connecticut expands HUSKY to all income-qualified people, regardless of immigration status, roughly 21,400 currently uninsured people will gain coverage, resulting in improvements in quality of life, family stability, school attendance, workforce participation, and more. The cost of this expansion would represent only 3% of the state's annual Medicaid budget. Furthermore,

much of this cost would be balanced out by savings in expenses for emergency Medicaid and uncompensated care.

Expanding HUSKY is economically sensible, and more than that, it is moral, just, and medically and epidemiologically prudent to do so. Please advance this bill out of committee in its current form, and then champion it in the full legislature. I look forward to supporting your efforts.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,  
Samuel Martínez  
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